



Newsletter

MISSION STATEMENT

The Grafton Historical Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization founded and operated by volunteers. We are dedicated to the preservation and sharing of Grafton area history.

July, 2025

Message from the President

I would like to begin this message by announcing that Steve Greger has joined the Grafton Historical Society's Board of Directors after his election at the May 8th Annual Meeting. He replaces Director John Gassert who stepped down at the end of his term. Welcome Steve, and thank you John for your past service on the Board.

GHS OFFICERS

Tom Krueger
President

Dave Antoine
Vice President

Debbie Krueger
Secretary

John Krueger
Treasurer

Nick Schanen
Director

Jim Wegner
Director

With the recent onset of summer, including much warmer temperatures and the hazy, lazy days that are so typical of summer, I want to assure you that the Grafton Historical Society board has been very busy. This year so far we have hosted three historic presentations more than 130 persons per program. We have two more programs booked to round out the year and one "in the wings" for 2026.

Regarding more recent news, it has been brought to our attention that a large rock of historical significance lies peacefully on property in the Village of Grafton, that has been owned since 1842 by generations of the Ahlers family. The rock is quite large, measuring about 9 ft x 4 ft x 3 ft, and has been

Steve Greger
Director

Darrel Blank
Director

Phyllis Wiggins
Director

Emily Engstrom
Director

identified as one that arrived with the glaciers from Canada. Known as the “Spirit Rock” it had historical significance to the tribe of Native American Indians that settled in the Grafton area. Its significance has been confirmed by Johnathan Buffalo, the Meskwaki Nation Historic Preservation Director of the Sac and Fox Indians of the Mississippi in Iowa. The Ahlers property is located along Wisconsin Avenue between Blaine’s Farm & Fleet and the Goodwill property and is currently under review for redevelopment. When the property is redeveloped, the Spirit Rock will need to be relocated. We have been advised that any move or relocation must be preceded by proper ceremony with due reverence to honor Indian ancestors from the early years of Grafton area history. The Grafton Historical Society intends to become involved with efforts to relocate and preserve the Spirit Rock and to share but another facet of Grafton area history. Stay tuned to learn and hear more about this story and upcoming event.

Working to **Discover, Share and Preserve** Grafton history.

Tom Krueger
GHS President

Spirit Rock, currently located at the Ahlers farm in Grafton.



Grafton's Own Lighthouse

Nestled along the western shore of Lake Michigan, the Kevich lighthouse



But there would finally be a lighthouse in Grafton. In 1981 Brana and Neva Kevich built a lighthouse home on a

stands as a small but significant part of Wisconsin's maritime landscape.

Located in Grafton, the Kevich lighthouse is distinctive in one important way – it is a privately owned and operated lighthouse.

Grafton's lighthouse was built in 1981 by the Kevich family atop a bluff historically known as Port Ulao, where steamboats once fueled by wood, made a routine stop.

The history of the lighthouse goes back more than 100 years however. In 1854 Congress allocated \$1,000 for a "small beacon light on or near the pier at Port Ulao. The light was never constructed, probably due to the fact that the need for wood for steamships ended and Port Ulao was eventually abandoned.

bluff overlooking Lake Michigan to bring to reality their dream to live in a lighthouse.

The Kevich lighthouse is a beautiful example of lighthouse architecture. The design of the lighthouse is relatively simple compared to the elaborate structures of the 19th century. Standing approximately 50 feet tall, it features a white cylindrical tower topped with a red roof. It has a focal plane of 163 feet, giving it the distinction of having the second highest focal plane of any active lighthouse on the Great Lakes. Only Boyer Bluff is higher. It is also a working "light." The U.S. Coast Guard certified it as a Class II "Private Aid to Navigation" in 1990.

In 1996, Dave and Mary Bennett purchased the lighthouse. The favorite aspect of their lighthouse home is the beautiful view of Lake Michigan.



Papa Charlie Jackson

William Henry “Papa Charlie” Jackson became a noted blues artist, but he was also one of the first musicians to provide examples of what Black music sounded like before the turn of the century.

Jackson’s early life is largely a mystery but a few facts are known. He is thought to have been born on November 10, 1887. His draft card lists his birthplace as New Orleans.

Jackson began his career playing in minstrel and medicine shows before World War I. By 1920 he had settled in Chicago, where he gave guitar lessons, worked in clubs and played for tips along Maxwell Street. The blues was just in its infancy then so Jackson was most likely playing ragtime music.

That changed in 1924, when he recorded the commercially successful “Airy Man Blues” and “Papa’s Lawdy Lawdy Blues” for Paramount records. One of his later tracks because the song for which he was famous – “Salty Dog Blues.”



Jackson reached a musical peak in 1929 when he was able to record with his longtime idol, Blind Arthur Blake, known then as the king of ragtime guitar.

He was one of the first musicians to compose and play “hokum” music. This type of music uses comic, often sexually suggestive lyrics and lively, danceable rhythms.

Jackson’s musical career continued into the 1930’s. He recorded for Paramount Records and then for Okeh Records, producing a total of 66 sides during his career.

The career of the musician who played the guitar, banjo and ukele with unstoppable rhythms, perfect for dancing, ended with Jackson’s death in Chicago on May 7, 1938. Most agree that he was a master of blues, hokum, and ragtime.



Grade School Basketball Early Grafton Style

Excerpted from "Memoirs of my life in Grafton, Wisconsin, 1941-1967,"
by Gerald "Jerry" E. Mueller, Ph.D.

For whatever reason, our school did not have a gym during the years I attended there. To shoot baskets we had to go outdoors, sometimes in below freezing weather, to utilize our only basket, which was mounted on a steel pole at the end of the school's parking lot. This inability to practice on a regular basis did not deter our school principal from scheduling games with schools in the surrounding areas. We didn't have a single player on our team who was good at shooting baskets, but one player, Ralph, who was six feet tall and chunky could muscle his way under the basket and make shots. On

uniforms so we had to play in our swimming trunks. I can still remember how the other teams and their fans would laugh at us on the court, especially me, as I wore a small, tight pair of ridiculously bright chartreuse trunks. Another unforgettable part of our basketball games is that the nuns at the Catholic schools we played always insisted on refereeing the games--in full habits! We soon learned why, as they cheated wholesale on the calls they made in favor of their own school. The non-Catholic schools had little recourse, as there were no outside or impartial referees

average our team would score 12 points per game. Not only did we have one embarrassing loss after another, we also didn't have

available. Let's hope the nuns went to confession immediately after each game! By the way, I never liked basketball.



Welcome to New Board Member Steve Greger

Steve and his wife Joanne have been Grafton residents since 2019. They are both native Badgers and are happy to have Grafton as their newest "home town." Steve is a University of Wisconsin-Madison graduate and has degrees in American History and Industrial Safety.

His career as an insurance industry safety consultant took him to various locations around the country. After retiring, he was a volunteer and board member for the Western Railway Museum near San Francisco. He is especially proud of successfully obtaining National Register of Historic Places recognition for the "Sacramento Northern Railway Historic District."

Ladies Night Out

All That Glitters in Grafton



Tuesday, August 5
5-8 pm

REGISTER TO ATTEND



**Stop by and say "Hi" at this year's
Grafton Historical Society booth
at Ladies Night Out.**



**Chad Lewis...Back
by Popular Demand**

**Thursday,
September 4th**

6:00 p.m.

**Rose Harms
Legion Post
1540 13th Avenue**

**Free and open to
the public. (\$5 free will
donation suggested.)**

**Refreshments and
Cash Bar**

THE HISTORY OF PARANORMAL WISCONSIN

**LEARN THE HISTORY OF WISCONSIN'S MOST BIZARRE
PARANORMAL EVENTS...**

**FROM ALIEN ABDUCTIONS TO HAUNTED PLACES,
MYSTERIOUS CREATURES AND CROP CIRCLES.**



Chad Lewis is a researcher and lecturer on topics of the strange and unusual. He holds a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Psychology and for the past 30 years has travelled the globe in search of unique and bizarre history.



Sponsoring partner 

**GRAFTON HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

P.O. BOX 481

Grafton, WI 53024

Website:

www.graftonareahistory.org

Email:

info@graftonareahistory.org



Welcome to our New Members!

Your support is so important to the Grafton Historical Society.

Bob and Joan Goebel

Thanks to all of you, our membership continues to grow!

We are currently at 94 members and hope to reach 100 by the end of the year.



Thanks to Pete Shrake from the Baraboo Circus World Museum for an engaging presentation on the heritage of the circus in Wisconsin. The audience learned that beginning in 1847, more than 100 circuses originated in Wisconsin, more than in any other state. Enjoying the presentation were Bob Prince, (left) and Louise Macky and Mary Miles (right.) Prince worked at the Great Milwaukee Circus Parade for 16 years, relating amazing stories about how many horses were brought to Milwaukee for the parade and how they were taken care of during their stay. Macky and Miles had just returned from a visit to the Circus World Museum and urged everyone to visit that Wisconsin State Historical site.



New Clues about the Artist

The mystery of the painter of the historic Wisconsin Chair Factory artwork is slowly being unraveled. The picture shows a signature of an “M.P. Goossens.” After doing some genealogical research, the GHS now has a clearer picture of the artist.

Marinus Petrus Goossens was born in Sint-Oedenrode, Netherlands, on February 27, 1859. He was the second youngest of 14 children. He married Johanna Detmers on September 22, 1881 and they had three daughters and a son.

From the Netherlands, the family emigrated to Quebec, Canada on July 21, 1913. From at least 1920 to 1940, Goossens lived in Milwaukee. In the 1920 census, he is listed as an “artist” in the “picturer” industry. He lived to the age of 91, passing away in Culver City, California.

The Chair Factory painting may actually be just one of many done by this artist. The picture and artist recently came to the attention of Mary Chemotti, a volunteer at the Cedarburg Art Museum. She told the GHS “Several of us became aware of a painting at an auction house. The subject was purportedly of a Cedarburg mill, and several of our historians identified it as being the old Nail Factory mill that still stands off of Columbia Road. The sketchy signature on that painting was best discerned as “M P G----sens.” The Cedarburg Art Museum is attempting to acquire this painting. Added to that information

is an e-mail from Goosen's granddaughter stating that his extended family is in possession of more of his paintings. The GHS is anxiously awaiting photographs of these.

Even though there are some answers now to the identity of the artist, some questions still remain. For example, how did it happen that Goossens traveled to the Grafton area and was he commissioned to painting the buildings? Stay tuned for more possible answers!



Vroolijk
Kerstfeest

Sneak Preview:

In time for the holiday season, the Grafton Historical Society
presents a program on

The Christmas Tree Ship.

The Christmas Tree ship was a three-masted schooner which routinely made trips between Wisconsin and Illinois to bring Christmas trees from the Wisconsin woodlands to eagerly awaiting customers to the south. It famously sunk in a violent storm on Lake Michigan in 1912. The ship was bound for Chicago when it foundered off Two Rivers. There are still ghost ship sightings in the area.

OZAUKEE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS

Bluegrass at the Village

SUNDAY, AUGUST 10, 2025

OZAUKEE COUNTY PIONEER VILLAGE
4880 HWY I, SAUKVILLE

Food &
Fun

Kids Corner

Raffles

Jam in
the Barn

RAIN OR SHINE-UNDER THE BIG TENT!

GATES & CONCESSIONS OPEN AT 10:30AM • MUSIC: 11:30AM to 5:30PM

BANDS: 11:30 Jake & Mikayla
1:00 The Henhouse Prowlers
2:00 Pickin Up Speed Tribute
2:30 Valley Fox
3:30 Cerny & Ogburn
4:30 The Henhouse Prowlers

ADMISSION: Admission Advance Ticket Prices: **\$12.00**
OCHS Members \$5, Kids 5 and Under Free
Day of Event \$15.00

VIP Tent Reservations \$75, 10 X 20ft, 4 Drink tks & a rocking chair

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Mary Boyle is a freelance writer and marketing professional who has her own business, Ozaukee Living Local, where she promotes events and things of interest in the County. An Ozaukee Native, Mary is also a historic reenactor of the French & Indian War. Between 2018-2023 she organized the popular "Crossroads Rendezvous" event that took place at Saukville's Peninsula Park. Mary will be presenting on the history of the Crossroads and their significance to Saukville and the State of Wisconsin. Copies of John Boatman's book, "at 'the Crossroads'", will be available for purchase at the meeting.

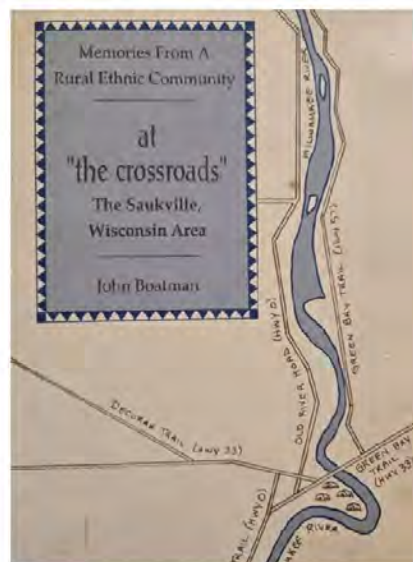
Ozaukee County Historical Society Quarterly Meeting

August 4, 2025

Guest Speaker

Mary Boyle

**The History of
Saukville Crossroads**



**Join us at the Peter Wollner American Legion- Hibert Ave, Cedarburg
Meeting at 7PM, Presentation at 7:30PM
Free and Open to the Public - Cash Bar & Refreshments**

DO YOU KNOW?

With this issue we'd like to continue our "Mystery Item" feature. If you have an idea what this item might be contact us

at: info@griftonareahistory.org.



If you have an item that you need help identifying and would like to submit it for a future newsletter edition, we'd be happy to include it.

DID YOU KNOW?

If you said that this **Mystery Item** from the last issue of our Newsletter was ...

**A Permanent Wave Machine,
you were right.**

The first permanent wave machine was invented by Charles Nessler, around 1906. The process involved wrapping the hair around heated rods, applying a chemical solution (borax or sodium hydroxide) and then heating the hair. The entire process could take up to six hours. While revolutionary, it was time-consuming and could be dangerous, sometimes causing burns on the scalp or hair damage. Over time, the "cold wave" method was developed.



This message was sent to dtkrueger@wi.rr.com by info@griftonareahistory.org
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